

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KE160
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Name of Service:	Early Scholars
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Address of Service:	25 The Old Mill Race, Athgarvan, Co. Kildare
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Eircode:	W12 AE42
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Name of Registered Provider:	Suzanne Fleming
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date¹⁹ of Inspection:	19/08/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM	18
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child and Family Agency Suite 7, Vista Primary Care Centre Ballymore Eustace Road Naas Co. Kildare W91 X38W
Inspection undertaken by:	F. Maher
Title:	Early Years Inspector

Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

Conditions if applicable

Not applicable.

Description of service

Early Scholars, located in the village of Athgarvan, outside Newbridge, Co. Kildare, is one of three private childcare services operated by the registered provider in Kildare and Laois. Full day care, part time and sessional care and education is offered to children aged from 0-6 years and it opens from 07:30am-17:30pm Monday-Friday. The service is located in an adapted two storey dwelling in a private housing estate in the village, five pre-school rooms, a dedicated sleep room, sanitary and nappy change facilities and a kitchen are provided. A large play area is located to the rear of the premises. A modular unit is located to the side of the premises providing the office space. Four pre-school rooms were operational over the summer period and included the Baby room, Mighty Minds, Busy Bees and Happy Campers rooms. The service is registered to provide school age care.

Staffing

Thirteen adults are employed in the service. On the day of the inspection there were six adults present and of these, three were working directly with the children and one staff member was working with the school age children present. The person in charge was assigned for kitchen duties and relief and the deputy person provided additional support to the care rooms as needed. The registered provider does not work in the service and was not present for the inspection.

All staff members held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Levels 5 to 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation

- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance, health, welfare and development of child, safety, premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the persons in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and
- (d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)

There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required, both remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

The records of five staff members employed since the last inspection which was carried out 12 March 2024, were reviewed.

(2)(a)(b)

Ten written and verified past employer references or references from a reputable source, in the absence of a past employer, were available in respect of the five adults whose records were reviewed.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were reviewed and had been obtained for thirteen employed staff members.

The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was available for one recently employed staff member who had lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.

(4)
Four members of staff recently employed and who work directly with the children held a major award at Level 5 or higher in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the minister to be equivalent.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,

Compliance Information

(1)
There were 19 children attending the service being supervised directly by 4 adults.

(2)
The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to during the day.

(8)(a)
There were at least two adults on the premises at all times for the duration of the Inspection.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

Ten child records were assessed.

(1)

All information with the relevant written details (a)-(i) were recorded on each child record assessed.

(3)(c)

All child records were available for inspection.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1)(h)

The attendance record for the service was reviewed and children’s attendance in the morning and on leaving the service were recorded in real time; any child who was absent was recorded as such in the attendance record.

(k)

The accident and incident record book was reviewed.

A sample of ten recorded incidents, between 24/07/2025-13/08/2025, were assessed and contained the relevant information and details.

(3)

The records as outlined above were open to inspection by the authorised person.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

There was a variety of age and developmentally appropriate toys, materials and equipment available indoors and outdoors for the children to use for play activities throughout the day. There were plenty of art and craft materials available including, paint, paper, crayons and materials for gluing, cutting and sticking. Sensory materials included sand and water play both indoors and outdoors. A pull to stand rail, push/pull toys and age-appropriate wooden climbing equipment provided for the gross motor development of the young children attending the Baby room. Each room had areas of interest including dress-up and kitchen/home corners which were equipped with plenty of props to promote and encourage imaginary play activities and the children were observed engaged, active and involved throughout the day.

Low level open shelving ensured resources and materials were freely and easily accessible to the children at all times in each pre-school room.

Child sized tables and chairs were maintained in good condition and provided areas for the children to sit comfortably when engaging in tabletop activities and during mealtimes. Rest areas consisted of soft furnishings and child sized couches. The cot room was equipped with five standard cots to facilitate the sleep needs for the children attending the Baby room and a sufficient number of low-level beds were in place for any child 2 years old and above wishing to avail of a period of sleep during the day.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

A registered provider shall ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a pre-school child attending the service and that the environment of the service is safe.

Compliance Information

General Safety:

The main entrance door to the service was secured with an electromagnetic locking system; this was controlled by staff to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the pre-school service.

Daily indoor room risk assessments were completed and maintained to ensure a safe play and work environment for the children and staff. The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the toys and equipment and safe storage of cleaning agents which were out of reach of the children. Low level cupboards were secured with child-safe devices. No hazards were identified in the outdoor play area.

Staff members advised the inspector they would remove any beaded necklace if observed that a child may be wearing them and would cut/halve any food items that may present a choking risk.

Infection Control:

Thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid hand soap and paper hand towel, hygienically dispensed from wall mounted units, were readily available for hygienic hand washing and drying and handwashing routines were well established and observed.

Foot pedal operated bins were provided for the disposal of used nappies, tissues, paper towel and waste. Plastic aprons, disposable gloves and nappy sacks were available for hygienic nappy change practices.

Written cleaning schedules were maintained for all room environments.

Administration of Medication:

Medicine was not given at the time of the inspection; written parental consent was available should medication be required to be administered to a child.

One child attending the service had an emergency medical care plan in place and the medicine, if required in an emergency situation was easily accessible to the staff; it was observed that the staff member caring for the child brought the medication to the play area in the event it was immediately required.

The staff members were familiar with the required practices when administering medication in the service.

Temperature reducing medication was available in the service if required.

Safe Sleep:

Staff members were very familiar with the universal safe sleep protocols when caring for sleeping children and carried out 10-minute sleep check observations on all sleeping children documenting the colour, position and breathing pattern of sleeping children in their care. The sleep room temperature was maintained between 16-20°C; a wall mounted air conditioning unit, recently installed, assisted in the regulation of the correct safe ambient temperature for sleeping babies and young children.

Fire Safety:

Monthly fire drills had been carried out and staff members were familiar with fire safety evacuation procedures from the service. The internal fire exits were easily recognisable and not obstructed.

Outing:

Outings are not conducted from the service; this was confirmed by staff members.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 25 - First aid

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-

(a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and

(b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

Compliance Information

(1)
Persons were trained in First Aid Response (FAR) and were immediately available to the children attending the service.

(2)(a)

The first aid equipment was safely stored, in a conspicuous position in the service.

(b) A suitably equipped first aid box for children was available at all times to the adults caring for the children attending the service

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-
- (a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and
 - (b) the number, type and maintenance record of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

A written record was available of fire drills which were completed monthly in the service, the last recorded fire drill took place 24 July 2025.

(b)

A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and fire detection system in the premises and were last serviced 19 December 2024 and 22 July 2025 respectively.

(4)

Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the service

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.

Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover valid until 27 March 2026. The insurance provided cover for 40 children.